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# Enemy Blocked, Angolan Rebel Says

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MAVINGA, Angola, Oct. 7 — The leader of a South African-backed rebellion in this country appealed today for United States aid to help him fight what he said was a Soviet-directed Angolan offensive against him.

At the same time, the guerrilla leader, Jonas Savimbi, asserted that his rebel forces had driven off a Soviet-directed push against his forward headquarters here.

The Angolan Government forces, he said at a news conference in a bunker hewn from the savanna, were "in very bad shape."

"For the short term," he said, "I think they'll go. But I think they will reorganize and come again."

## 'A Will to Resist'

Repeating his assertion that Soviet advisers were directing Government troops, he added: "The Russians want to test whether there's a will to resist them or not."

The Russians, he said, were "like elephants who come and go on the same track." So, he said, he assumed there would be more Government offensives.

Since the repeal of United States legislation forbidding assistance to his National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, he said, he had sent representatives to Washington seeking aid.

Mr. Savimbi said he believed figures in the Reagan Administration, whom he did not identify, were sympathetic to his cause, but, he said, referring to the Americans: "I still put this question: When are you coming in? When?"

He did not define the nature of the assistance he was seeking from the United States.

The rebel leader has been fighting from bases in the sparsely populated southeastern part of the country since his South African-supported forces lost to the Cuban-backed Popular Move-

ment for the Liberation of Angola in a civil war at the time of independence from Portugal in 1975.

Reporters based in South Africa were flown here Sunday night for the news conference and a tour of a battlefield to the north where Government forces were reportedly beaten back in a fight in late September.

Mr. Savimbi's news conference in Mavinga, 150 miles north of the border with South African-controlled South-West Africa, was the first since the battle, part of a two-pronged offensive that forced the rebels to abandon Cazombo, to the northeast, last month.

The news conference could not have been arranged without South African assent and was apparently designed to give Mr. Savimbi a platform for his appeal to the United States in the midst of what he says is the biggest Government offensive in a decade.

## Battle for Mavinga

Mr. Savimbi said the fighting for Mavinga, with its long, strategically important airstrip, had pitted 4,600 Government soldiers, backed by the Angolan Air Force and purportedly led by Soviet advisers, against 5,500 of his own men. The battle took place about 20 miles northwest of here at the Lomba River, he said.

In what seemed a reflection of fierce fighting, he said his forces had lost 410 men dead and 832 wounded. He said losses incurred by the avowedly Marxist Government in Luanda included 2,300 men dead or wounded, 79 vehicles destroyed, 17 aircraft, including five advanced, Soviet-supplied MI-25 helicopters, brought down, and 60 prisoners taken, including the pilot of a MIG-21 jet fighter.

Mr. Savimbi did not present evidence of such high casualties on either side. During a visit to the Lomba River area, reporters saw eight corpses clad in Government-issue uniforms. In sandy soil, they were shown what rebel offi-

cers said were the graves of eight more. But it was unclear if there were more dead in other parts of the battle area not visited by reporters. Rebel casualties were not shown to reporters.

Mr. Savimbi has fought off four previous offensives against positions in southeastern Angola, where he has held Mavinga for the last four years. The latest, however, he said, was the biggest yet and seemed to have been launched for various reasons.

One was to win a Government victory before a congress of the ruling party in December, he said. Another was "to discourage the Americans from getting involved" following the repeal of the Clark Amendment — 1976 legislation forbidding United States support for his movement.

## Cuban Troops in Angola

An estimated 25,000 to 30,000 Cuban soldiers are based in Angola to support the Luanda Government, and Western diplomats say there are also Soviet military advisers, who have not, however, previously been reported as having accompanied Government troops into battle. There has been no independent corroboration of the charge that Soviet advisers were present on the battlefield.

Mr. Savimbi denied that he had requested South African air strikes in support of his forces or that South African ground troops had joined the fight against Angolan Government forces. There was no way of substantiating the conflicting assertions of either side in the battle about who had fought in support of whom.

Mr. Savimbi acknowledged that, in the last four weeks, supplies of arms from South Africa and other unidentified countries had been greater than at any other time in 10 years of fighting. He said his troops had received significant shipments of antitank weapons and antiaircraft systems. Moreover, he said, South Africa had provided medical personnel to tend his wounded.